



ROYAL COLLEGE
RED CROSS SOCIETY



IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL HEALTH



HealthFirst



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The HealthFirst Magazine Series

Welcome to the 2024 edition of the HealthFirst magazine, an initiative of the Royal College Red Cross Society. As the editor, it is my great pleasure to present this resource, which has been designed with the wellbeing of our community in mind.

In an everchanging world, health is one of the most precious assets we possess. Whether it is knowing how to provide first aid in emergencies, understanding the importance of mental health, or preventing common injuries, the knowledge we share in this magazine can make a real difference in everyday lives.

This edition focuses on the vital topic of the **Importance of Physical Health**. Maintaining good physical health is essential for overall well-being, preventing

chronic diseases, and enhancing quality of life. Through this magazine, we aim to provide readers with practical tips, knowledge, and inspiration to adopt healthier habits, stay active, and prioritize physical well-being. Whether at home, school, or in the community, we hope to empower individuals to make informed decisions that support long-term health and vitality.

At the Royal College Red Cross Society, we believe that health awareness is a collective responsibility. Our goal is to foster a community that is proactive about health and safety, empowering individuals to make informed decisions that lead to healthier, safer lives.

I hope this magazine serves as a useful guide for you and inspires you to prioritize health in all aspects of your life. Together, we can create a healthier, more resilient future.

Yudhana Nanayakkara,
Editor,
HealthFirst Magazine.

Importance of Physical Health

What is Physical Fitness?

We often talk about physical fitness, but what does it truly mean? It goes beyond just maintaining a good figure or the ability to run a marathon. Physical fitness encompasses five essential components,

- Cardiovascular fitness – ensuring your heart and lungs function effectively.
- Muscular fitness – focusing on muscle strength, endurance, and power.
- Motor fitness – enhancing balance, coordination, and agility.
- Body composition – achieving a healthy balance between fat and lean muscle.
- Metabolic health – maintaining healthy blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

Achieving Physical Fitness

Achieving physical fitness is a combination of being physically active and maintaining a balanced diet. The best way to get started is through regular exercise. To ensure overall fitness, your routine should include aerobic exercises (like walking, jogging, cycling, or swimming), resistance training (like using bodyweight exercises or weights), and flexibility exercises (like stretching and balance exercises).

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that children and adolescents (ages 5-17) engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise daily, including muscle-strengthening activities a few times a week. Adults (ages 18-64) should aim for at least 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week, or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercises, with muscle-strengthening exercises 2-3 times a week.

Benefits of Regular Exercise

Engaging in regular exercise provides numerous benefits, improving not only your physical but also your mental health.

- Improves cardiovascular health
- Enhances brain function
- Builds strong muscles and bones
- Helps maintain a healthy weight
- Boosts the immune system
- Relieves stress

Overcoming Barriers to Exercise

While exercise provides many benefits, it's important to manage the associated risks, such as injuries from overexertion. The best way to avoid these risks is through proper warm-up and stretching, using



correct techniques, and listening to your body. Always consult a doctor if you have pre-existing conditions like heart disease or asthma.

Remember, proper hydration is key. Drink plenty of water before, during, and after exercise. Avoid exercising immediately after a meal, and if exercising for long durations, have a small snack beforehand to maintain energy levels.

Avoiding Sedentary Behavior

Even with regular exercise, sitting for long periods can negatively impact your health. Avoid sitting for extended periods by taking short activity breaks, especially when attending online classes or spending time in front of a screen. Move around and stretch to keep your body active throughout the day.

Aerobic and Strength Training



An effective workout routine should include both aerobic and strength training exercises. Aerobic exercises like jogging, cycling, or dancing improve cardiovascular health. If you can't go outdoors, alternatives like skipping or high knees running in place are great options.



For strength training, use your body weight, resistance bands, or free weights. Focus on major muscle groups like the chest, arms, back, and legs. It's essential to gradually increase the intensity of your workouts to avoid injury and remember to incorporate flexibility exercises to prevent stiffness.

Balanced Diet



A balanced diet is crucial to physical health. This means eating a variety of foods in the right proportions, ensuring that you get all the essential nutrients: carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and minerals. A healthy diet helps maintain energy, strengthens the immune system, and prevents disease. Key tips for a balanced diet include,

- Never skip meals.
- Stay hydrated, drinking plenty of water throughout the day.



- Eat a variety of foods ensuring that your meals contain the right balance of nutrients.
- Incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your diet.
- Limit unhealthy snacks like fast food and sugary drinks.

Avoiding Harmful Habits

Alcohol and Smoking

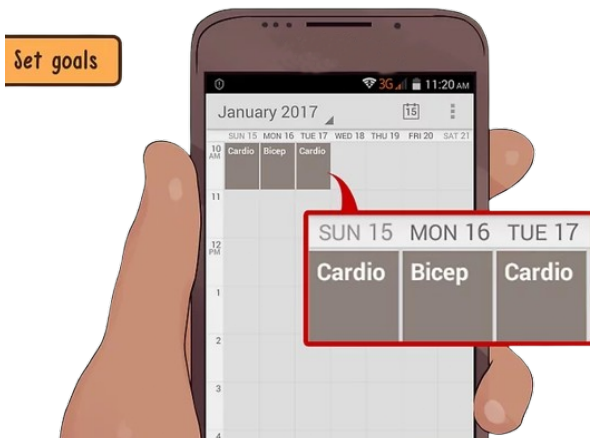


Avoiding harmful habits such as excessive alcohol consumption and smoking is critical to maintaining good health. Alcohol can lead to long-term damage to vital organs like the liver and heart, while smoking increases the risk of lung disease, heart disease, and various cancers. Quitting these habits significantly improves your overall health. Alcohol affects the body in several ways,

- Liver damage.
- Cardiovascular diseases.
- Various cancers.

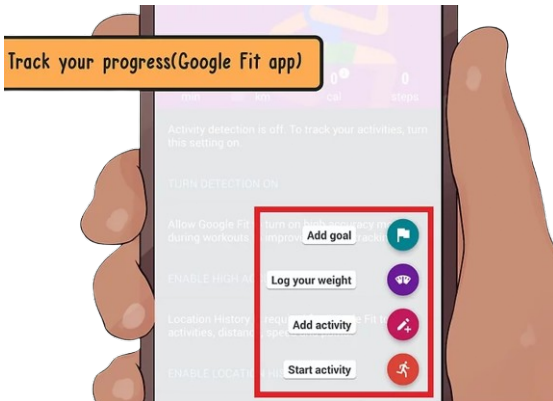


Smoking, on the other hand, affects nearly every organ in the body. Tobacco smoke contains thousands of harmful chemicals, increasing the risk of cancer, respiratory illnesses, and cardiovascular diseases. Quitting smoking reduces these risks significantly.



Make an Exercise Plan for a Balanced

Lifestyle



A balanced exercise plan is essential for overall health, targeting cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength, flexibility, and mental well-being. Each type of exercise brings unique benefits, and when combined, they work synergistically to promote long-term wellness, improve body function, and prevent disease. Here's how each component of a balanced exercise regimen contributes to health and why it's crucial to include them in your weekly routine.

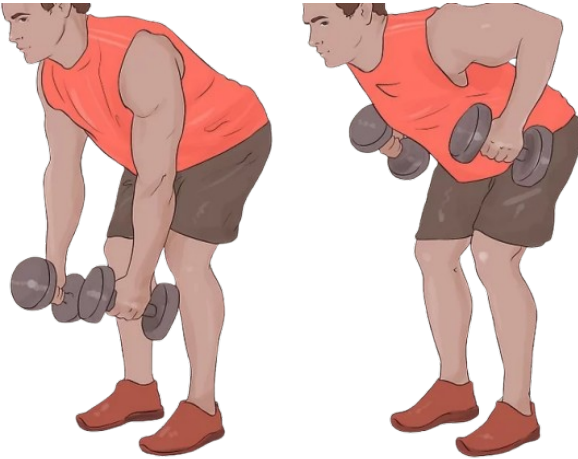
Cardiovascular Exercises

Cardio, or aerobic exercise, increases heart rate and breathing, improving heart and lung health. Activities like running, cycling, brisk walking, and swimming fall under this category and are key to cardiovascular endurance. Benefits of cardiovascular exercises includes,



- Improved heart health.
- Caloric Burn & Weight Control.
- Mood Enhancement.

Strength Training



Strength or resistance training targets muscle strength, endurance, and bone health. It includes exercises that use body weight, resistance bands, weights, or machines to work specific muscle groups. Benefits of strength training includes,

- Increased muscle and bone health.
- Improved Metabolic Rate.
- Improved daily functional fitness.

Flexibility and Mobility Exercises



Flexibility and mobility exercises, like stretching and dynamic

movements, improve joint range of motion and reduce stiffness. Yoga, Pilates, and targeted stretching fall into this category. Benefits of Flexibility and mobility exercises includes,

- Reduced risk of strains and sprains.
- Enhanced Posture and Alignment.
- Better joint health.

Balance and Stability Training

Balance and stability exercises are often overlooked but are crucial for coordination, reducing fall risk, and improving overall body control. Exercises that enhance balance include activities like single leg stands, stability ball exercises, and tai chi. Benefits of balance and stability training includes,

- Enhanced coordination and reaction.
- Improved core strength.
- Improved functional independence.

Rest and Recovery

Adequate rest is essential for muscle recovery, growth, and mental rejuvenation. Recovery time allows for tissue repair and adaptation, reducing the risk of overtraining. Overtraining can increase stress hormones like cortisol. Taking rest days helps maintain hormonal balance, supporting metabolism and immune health. Physical exercise can be mentally demanding, so rest days help reduce stress, prevent burnout, and maintain motivation.

The Synergy of a Balanced Exercise Plan

Each component of a balanced exercise plan plays a unique role in physical health. Together, they contribute to a comprehensive fitness routine that enhances endurance, strength, flexibility, coordination, and mental wellness. Integrating these elements provides cumulative benefits, resulting in greater physical resilience, energy, and an improved quality of life.

Combining cardio, strength, flexibility, and balance exercises enables the body to function more efficiently and recover faster. Regular engagement in these activities has been linked to reduced risks of various chronic diseases, improved immune function, and increased longevity.

Acknowledgement

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